

FOREIGN LEGATIONS.

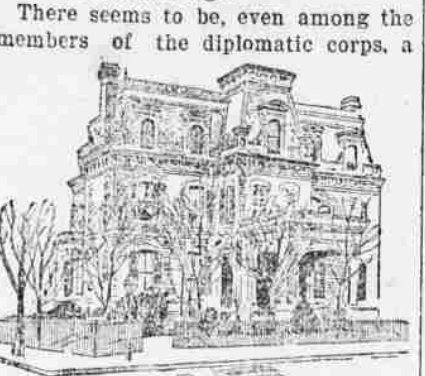
OFFICIAL RESIDENCES OF THE GREAT POWERS.

Uncle Sam is Gradually Being Made the Equal of the Monarchies—Just Think of It—Prussia Made the First Step.

Washington, D. C.

It is a fact that the Austrian minister has recently bought for his government a legation building in this city—to serve perhaps in the near future for purposes of an embassy—suggests the possibility before many months of the elevation of the rank of the representative of the United States from minister to ambassador at all the capitals of the so-called first-rate powers of the treaty of Vienna. Although all of the nations of the Western hemisphere and those of the far East recognize the United States as a first-rate power, because of its trade and resources, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria, Italy, Spain and Portugal, the nations which were represented at the congress of Vienna in 1815, have not until recently in their diplomatic relations considered the United States as their level in dignity and importance. To this fact has been due the tardiness of the great European powers to purchase buildings in this country, although their representatives in Washington admit that legation and ambassadorial buildings should have been purchased in all cases many years ago.

There seems to be, even among the members of the diplomatic corps, a



GREAT BRITAIN'S OFFICIAL HOME.

good deal of ignorance as to the time and circumstances of the purchase of the few legations and embassies owned in Washington by foreign governments. The general impression is that the government of Great Britain took the initiatory step, but the fact is that the government of Prussia, whose property was subsequently transferred to the German empire, was the first foreign power to own property in the city of Washington for the use of its representatives. As early as 1864 Baron Gerold, for the kingdom of Prussia, purchased the property in Fifteenth street adjoining the bank of Corcoran & Riggs, between Pennsylvania avenue and H street. The house was a large, double square building, built much after the pattern of the fashionable houses of that time, and was then considered to be in the heart of the portion of the city most desirable for such a purpose. It was at this house that the successive representatives of the kingdom and the empire dispensed the hospitality for which they have earned so liberal a name, and, as time went on and the scale of diplomatic entertainments became larger and more elaborate, there was never a question as to the success of the dinners and dances of the German legation.

The policy of the government of Great Britain is never to purchase land except in what are known as the first-rate powers of the congress of Vienna. This policy, it appears, was departed from in the case of the United States; for the property now owned by the British embassy was built by Sir Edward Thornton nineteen years ago.

It is said that Sir Edward Thornton could have bought all of the land in the block, from one corner of N street and Connecticut avenue, where the em-



THE COREAN LEGATION.

bassy now is, for what it has cost in comparatively recent years to build the addition, which is used as a ballroom. The embassy building is now considered too small for many purposes. The representatives of the British government here, at least the younger of the secretaries and attaches, would much prefer an entire block of ground, such as is possessed by England in other countries, where they could have their tennis courts and give garden parties

of surpassing splendor. There is no way, however, of remedying this defect, without the purchase of another tract of land. Although the property covers about a third of the block bounded by Connecticut avenue, N and Nineteenth streets, the ground is so covered by the buildings that there is not enough room for further additions within the iron fence. The present building was erected in 1876, at the suggestion of Sir Edward Thornton, who was then British minister to this country, from plans and specifications prepared according to his own ideas; the sum allotted for this purpose by the British government was £50,000. The embassy is a square, massive building of red brick, with stone trimmings, much after the fashion of architecture prevailing about that time.

The government of Corea also owns its legation here. The property was at one time a portion of the estate of Captain Seth Ledyard Phelps, and the sale was negotiated by Sevellon A. Brown, for along period chief clerk of the state department. The building is in Thirteenth street, at its northern juncture with Iowa circle; it is a modest gray building with a port cochere. It is large enough for the unpretentious entertainments of the Korean officials. At the time of the purchase of the property there was a question raised at the District of Columbia tax office in regard to exemption from taxation. Some correspondence ensued between the state department and the tax office, which resulted in the exemption of the Korean property. There are no laws in the District of Columbia bearing upon the subject and the exemption from taxation of the Korean building as well as of other foreign legations is simply an act of comity on the part of this government.

The legation of the Mexican government in I street was built from designs of Mr. Romero, the minister, in 1887. As early as 1882 Senor Romero had conceived the plan of building a legation for the government, but not until 1886 did he succeed in getting the money for the purpose. The amount appropriated was \$100,000, but since that time improvements have been made and elaborate furnishings bought which have increased the original price \$25,000 or \$30,000. The legation is a large, square building of pressed brick, with brown stone trimmings.

The government of the United States leases or rents property for all of its representatives within the territory of foreign governments, except in Corea and in Siam, where the property is owned, acquired in Corea by purchase and in Siam by gift. Time and again has the importance of the ownership of legations and embassies in foreign countries been urged upon congress by successive presidents.

It is presumed that the diplomatic and consular appropriation bill of the



THE FRENCH LEGATION.

fifty-fourth congress may differ in this respect from those of its predecessors.

The French government has made several attempts to purchase property, at first for use as a legation, and now for use as an embassy. The first attempt was made to purchase the property owned and occupied by Anthony Pollok at Seventeenth and I streets. Failing in this, the ambassador leased the property occupied during his life by Admiral David D. Porter in H street, adjoining the Metropolitan club. Here the embassy was established year before last. The property would have been purchased by the French government if an agreement with the Porter heirs could have been reached. But there was a dispute as to the value of the property among the heirs themselves, so that at the present time a sale is not possible. A compact has been entered into, however, by which the repairs are kept up by both sides, looking to an adjustment and sale at some future time.

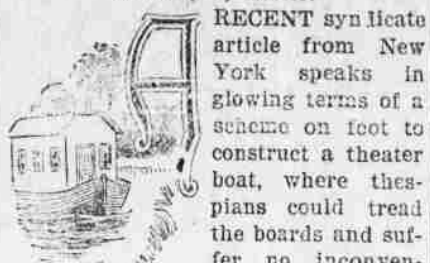
International law has invented a fiction known as extra-territoriality, by which the minister, though actually in a foreign country, is still considered to remain within the territory of his own state. He continues to be subject to the laws of his own country as if he lived there, both with respect to his personal status and his rights of property. His children, too, though born in a foreign country, are considered natives of their own. The result of inviolability is an entire exemption from local jurisdiction both in civil and criminal cases, and this independence extends to a minister's house, papers, effects and carriages.

ON A THEATER BOAT.

STAGE LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

Floating Craft That Journey from Place to Place Furnish Amusement in River Towns—Actors Prefer the Pleasant Railroad Tours.

Lacon (Ill.) Letter.



RECENT synchro article from New York speaks in glowing terms of a scheme on foot to construct a theater boat, where these plans could tread the boards and suffer no inconveniences of the one-night stands, and the tie-pass joke would drop into oblivion. The author went on to advance the assertion that the idea originated in Russia, where a St. Petersburg syndicate had built a great floating theater 400 feet in length and 40 feet in width. The truth of the matter is, that the idea is strictly American, and pronouncedly Mississippian. For years the theater boat has been a fixture on the Mississippi river and its tributaries, and if one showboat at least did not make a date in the towns along the rivers each season the inhabitants thereof would think something was wrong.

The theater boat is part of the Illinois river craft. Foremost of these play houses are French's boats. He is the



CAPT. FRENCH.

proprietor of two of the handsomest floating palaces in the world, known as French's New Sensations. "Les milleurs compagnies qui voyagent." His territory is from the Monongahela to the gulf, from St. Paul to New Orleans, and he is patiently awaiting the opening of the ship waterway to Lake Michigan, so that he may entertain the people of Chicago with an innovation.

Mr. French manages the No. 2 boat, while Mrs. French not only manages the No. 1 boat, but pilots it also. At present they are in southern waters, working a field they have visited annually for the last twenty years.

The first intimation the people of the river towns have of the coming of the boat is the arrival of the craft itself. The stillness of some quiet morning is suddenly broken by the notes of a steam calliope, and in five minutes every boy in town is at the river's bank, and among the townspeople it is spoken to one another: "The theater boat is here." Thus in five minutes the boat has made its presence well known. There are no bill boards, no newspaper advertising, no lithographs, no advance sale—nothing but a steam calliope. At noon a brass band parades the streets, and again in the evening, as a gentle reminder, the calliope and band are heard.

French's show last year was better than usual. His boat, also, was better, and had just left the decorator's hands, who had placed landscapes all over its sides. The interior was a marvel of



MRS. FRENCH.

elaborateness, and, in theatrical detail, perfect. When once inside of the boat one could not imagine he was in any other than the finest theater in all these parts. There was the correct staging, a full orchestra, the boxes, electric lights, the dress circle, parquet, gallery and lobbies. Trained ushers seated the patrons, the order was perfect, and withal the credulous were much disappointed in finding things in such good

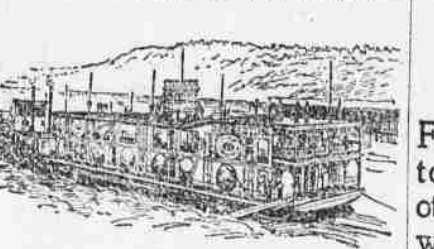
shape and under such good management. The performance was a high-class vaudeville, including turns by the Pattons, Ada Seeker, Prof. Wambold, Leggett, Carleton sisters, Kelly and Burgess, Heath and Cadd and others. The program caused much solid fun.

The general admission is 25 cents, 10 cents extra for reserved seats and 15 cents for the gallery. The house at this point was worth \$125. The expenses are light, for the actors do not command, neither do they ask, the salaries they receive on the stage proper.

"It is this way," said Mr. French. "The actors get tired of the heat and dust and foul air and overwork of the cities, or they are sick from one-night stands, and they say to themselves: 'Well, I'll go down and show with old man French as a sort of vacation,' and they come. Salary is a secondary consideration. Sometimes I am overrun with these fellows, and I cannot afford to pay them salaries, so they do a turn or two at each performance just for their board and lodging. I pay salaries after each performance and am very strict with the boys, maybe too much so, but then in a big family, such as I have here on the boat, discipline has to be severe. I carry about forty people. My expenses run about \$70 each show day. There is now as good money in the business as there was years ago. Other boats have failed, but it was because they run their shows too loose. Mine are strictly moral. I allow no act or word that tends to vulgarity, and to these things I attribute my success."

French's No. 2 is towed by a steamer known as Ruth, a powerful stern-wheeler. It shoves the massive hulk before it. The pilot steers from the pilot house on the theater boat, where he has arranged a perfect system of whistles. It is no small undertaking to handle the boat in heavy wind or strong current, and one would think the massive ark would swing the small steamer at will. So it would were it not for a piece of machinery which winds up ropes from either side and can manipulate the large boat at command of the engineer, twisting it clear around if needs be. The quarters of the actors are in front, where they have handsomely appointed rooms, well lighted and ventilated. There is a lounging room for the men, and a sitting room with a sewing machine for the ladies, and a parlor where all may meet and enjoy themselves or entertain company. Below, in front, is the box and business office, and to the other side the barn for the two horses and a dog kennel. Above in the rear the stage hands and engine men have their rooms. The dining room is used as a green room at night, and is back and below the stage. The calliope is in the rear of the pilot house, and is played by a little Dutchman with powerful strength in his fingers and a wad of cotton in each ear. He can play anything that can be put on a piano, and his selections are really entertaining. One hundred and sixty pounds of steam pressure is necessary for good results.

The actors come on the stage re-



A THEATER BOAT.

freshed after a day's pleasure in fishing or hunting or rowing, not fatigued by an early rise or long journey, or at outs with the world from poor hotel accommodations and riding in crowded omnibuses, or tired from getting trunks in shape at the theater. It is one long midsummer's dream for them. They do cast a tear now and then for their poor friends on the Rialto, sweltering in heat and enveloped in dust, and wonder when all touring companies will travel by boat and revolutionize barnstorming and one night stands. These who have been stranded at some junction place with their things in the hands of a village constable and the manager out of money and all that, smile to contemplate the change. There would be no stranding with a floating theater, as it could break loose from its moorings and float down stream, even if the manager had no money to buy coal to steam up stream.

It is said that all the best show towns, from a theatrical standpoint, are those which have a water front, and there are hundreds of them. The thing might be overdone with too many floating palaces, but it hardly seems possible. Mr. Arnold, proprietor of the Floating Chapel now tied up for the winter at Lacon, has visited river towns for the last seven years, and he was at no town twice, except as he came down the Illinois river on his return trip.

Our Country.

We are great geographically, great in climate, great in wealth, in undeveloped resources, in unparalleled possessions, and in those elements which go to make up a great nation, as the world reckons greatness. Our poets, historians, writers, philosophers and professional men and women will compare most favorably with any similar number of men and women in any age of the world's history.—Rev. H. D. Far-

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March

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May

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